United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General announces major breakthrough in Mozambican peace process after meeting in Maputo with President of Mozambique and President of RENAMO; departs for Kenya as African visit continues.

+ United Kingdom, France, Netherlands and Argentina each send one ship to join United States and Canadian vessels enforcing Haiti sanctions.

+ United Nations human rights team to leave Geneva for Georgia tomorrow to investigate reported human rights abuses during recent fighting in Abkhazia; Special Representative Brunner hopes to convene round table with Abkhaz and Georgian sides in late November or December.

+ Sixth Committee (Legal), considering question of responsibility for attacks on United Nations personnel, hears call for application of universal jurisdiction.

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After meeting today in Maputo with Joaquim Chissano, President of Mozambique, and Afonso Dhlakama, President of the Mozambique National Resistence Movement (RENAMO), Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali announced a major breakthrough in the Mozambican peace process. In a statement issued at Headquarters, he said an agreement had been reached with regard to the Electoral Commission, which would be composed of ten members for the Mozambican Government, seven for RENAMO and three for other political parties, as well as an independent chairman.

The Secretary-General also announced that all political parties would be represented at a forthcoming technical-level meeting, and that a draft electoral law would be sent to the Council of Ministers for approval before the end of the month. The draft would then be presented to the National Assembly for final adoption, hopefully before the end of November. A new calander for the demobilization of paramilitary forces, militia and irregulars would be approved before the end of the week, he continued. Problems relating to the composition of three Presidential Commissions had also been overcome.

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The Secretary-General said the new momentum in the peace process would help him to convince the Security Council to maintain the United Nations presence in Mozambique. It would also encourage international financial institutions, donor countries and the European Community to offer more assistance to the country.

The Secretary-General was accompanied at today's meeting by James Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Aldo Ajello, his Special Representative for Mozambique. He later left Maputo for Nairobi, Kenya.

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The United Kingdom, France, Netherlands and Argentina are each sending one ship to enforce the oil and arms embargo against Haiti, a United Nations spokesman said today. The ships will join six United States and three Canadian vessels already patrolling the waters off Haiti.

The sanctions were reimposed by Security Council resolution 873 (1993), and came into force on Monday night, because of the failure of the authorities in Haiti to fully implement the Governors Island Agreement. In resolution 875 (1993), the Council called on Member States to ensure strict implementation of the embargo by halting and inspecting ships travelling towards the country.

The spokesman said that "each vessel or each Member State has the autonomy within the resolution to act according to the resolution", and that each Government was informing the Council of actions being taken to comply with it.

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A United Nations human rights team will leave Geneva for Georgia tomorrow to investigate reports of human rights abuses during recent fighting in the Abkhaz region, according to a statement issued by the United Nations Office in Geneva. The team is expected to be in the region for eight to ten days.

An investigation into human rights abuses was one of the conditions laid down by a Georgian Government delegation before it would sit down for talks with Abkhaz representatives, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Georgia, Edouard Brunner, said earlier this week. The other condition was that such talks would take place within the context of Georgian sovereignty.

Ambassador Brunner also said that he hoped to convene a round table in the second half of November or in December, and noted that the Abkhaz and Georgian sides were aware that the international community would not consider providing aid to the region without a political solution to the conflict.

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In order to ensure that those suspected of attacks on United Nations personnel are adequately tried and punished, a system of universal jurisdiction should be applied, the representative of Brazil told the Sixth

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Committee (Legal) today. The Committee was continuing its consideration of the question of responsibility for attacks on United Nations and associated personnel.

Yesterday, Australia's representative told the Committee that a proposed international convention to protect the safety of United Nations personnel should extend to personnel working for humanitarian organizations on United Nations operations under an arrangement with the Secretary-General. He said he favoured a broad approach to the scope of such a convention, but noted that it might be necessary to define more clearly the circumstances under which United Nations personnel were carrying out activities in connection with United Nations operations. That would be particularly true for situations under authorization other than that of Security Council resolutions.

The Canadian representative agreed with the scope of application outlined by Australia, but said it would be difficult to include individuals or organizations working in the same area as United Nations operations but not formally linked to the Organization. The representative of Ireland said that the scope of the proposed convention might be widened to include personnel working not only under a Security Council mandate, but also those authorized by the General Assembly. The convention might also include humanitarian aid workers not operating pursuant to an agreement with the United Nations or the Secretary-General.

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